

the two parties obviously have different approaches when it comes to gamesmanship around this country's financial commitments. Setting all of that aside, the fact is our country is now way too close to default for the Senate to be playing games.

This debate is almost entirely about financial commitments made under past Presidents. It doesn't have anything to do with legislation that is still in the works. That is a fact. The reality is my colleague from Louisiana seeks to bring the country closer to default. The Senate ought to be clear on the consequences if that were to come to pass.

Default would be an economic disaster for our country as well as for individual families and businesses. And, again, colleagues, since senior citizens came up so frequently, this has been my particular passion. It is why I went into public service. Social Security stops going out. Military could stop getting paid. Interest rates go into the stratosphere, making existing Federal debt even more expensive, if you go forward with this proposal.

Costs go up for families who want to buy homes or buy cars. Getting a small business loan becomes more expensive. Jobs across the country are wiped out amid this turmoil. And all of that would happen right in the middle of the holidays, when Americans are simply trying to enjoy their time with families, go out and shop for presents, and enjoy their time together.

My view is, after almost 2 years of pandemic and economic chaos, people have had it hard enough. And two leaders—a Democrat and a Republican—have come together because they understand the Senate doesn't need to add another catastrophe to their financial challenges, the challenges I just described—one, by the way, that would be entirely self-made.

There is an agreement before the Senate, colleagues; an agreement between the Republican leader and the Democratic leader. That agreement brought the two sides together. My colleagues must not throw that agreement away. And I respect all my colleagues—all of them—but I just believe that this proposal from the Senator from Louisiana is misguided. It brings our country closer to default.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I really appreciate my colleague's remarks, I do. I don't agree with his objection, but I appreciate it.

I just want to say a couple more words. I didn't make a deal. Now, let me say it again. Let me say it a different way.

I don't hate anybody. Lord knows I look for grace wherever I can find it. I like every one of my colleagues; I really do. The Senate is the most interesting group of people I have ever been around.

I am not part of management. I am labor, and I meant what I said. I belong in labor because I don't always fit in, and I do believe it is one of my best qualities.

The truth of the matter is—and this is what we are disagreeing over—President Biden, Senator SCHUMER, Speaker PELOSI, my other Democratic friends have proposed the Build Back Better bill.

Now, any economist with a pulse will tell you that it is going to cost about \$5 trillion without the gimmicks. It is going to raise taxes a couple of trillion. We will probably end up having to borrow another 3 trillion to pay for it. We will have to borrow the money. We don't have the 3 trillion. We don't even have 5 percent of it.

Now, I think that the bill represents a spending taxation and borrowing orgy that we don't need, but I understand my Democratic colleagues disagree. I get that.

My Democratic friends can't pass and implement the bill without raising the debt limit. That is just a fact, because they won't be able to borrow the money.

Now, if I don't support the bill, why do I want to support allowing them to borrow the money, especially when Senator SCHUMER—my friend Senator SCHUMER—can do it on his own?

He can do it before the weekend is out. All he has got to do is do a simple amendment to the budget resolution.

What am I missing here?

And I know a deal has been made and some people are going to vote for it. You are not looking at one of them. And I respect their right to make a deal, but I didn't make a deal. But I have been put in the position of saying: OK, Kennedy, we are going to show you. You have got to choose between keeping your word to your people or cutting Medicare.

And we wonder why Congress polls right up there with skim milk. That is why they look around, they see frauds and liars in every direction.

I really regret that my bill didn't pass because it would have protected our elderly, and I do support protecting our elderly. And it would have protected our farmers, and I do support protecting our farmers. And this so-called deal puts them both at risk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

Mr. GRAHAM. Madam President, I have a different approach that will get the same result.

But to my colleagues here, we are playing the Medicare card in a very dangerous fashion. Senator HAWLEY said it pretty well. Medicare is something people depend upon, and all of us understand the need to keep Medicare solvent. We need to reform it to save it.

But this idea puts all of us in a box, and I don't appreciate it and I won't forget it.

Now, this is a problem on our side. You don't even have to listen, Senator

WYDEN. For 4 months, we have been saying, as a party, our Democratic colleagues are spending all this money by themselves through reconciliation; they should choose that path to raise the debt ceiling.

Because what are we talking about? A \$1.9 trillion spending bill without one Republican vote through reconciliation.

We have pending next week another reconciliation proposal that scores at 1.7 trillion, if you assume every program goes away in a year. I will be in the NBA before that assumption. I don't like my chances.

Ronald Reagan said the closest thing to immortality on Earth is a government program.

So they have written the bill for the 17 big spending items to expire within 1, 2 or 3 years, and not one of them want them to expire.

So the whole bill is a fraud. And the Congressional Budget Office is going to give to me Friday what the bill would cost if the sunset clauses actually went away—did go away; what would it cost if the programs survive, which it will.

And I anticipate, Senator KENNEDY, it will be at least twice what we are talking about.

The effect on the debt is 367 billion only because they limited the programs to last for a year or two rather than the 10 years they are actually going to last.

So the deficit is going to go from 367 billion to probably close to 2 trillion. We are going to expose that Friday. They are playing a game. They are creating gimmicks.

And Senator MANCHIN, to his credit, said: "I believe Build Back Better is full of gimmicks."

We will know Friday exactly what the bill would look like without gimmicks.

This is the ultimate gimmick. If you had asked me 4 months ago, "How does this movie end?" I will be reading in the paper about a rules change to the Senate made by the House, where I have got to pick between Medicare and abandoning what I said I would do for 4 months.

This is a deal that led to Donald Trump. If you wonder why there is a Donald Trump, it is moments like this, where everybody starts down a road that makes perfect sense, you panic, and you throw everybody over.

They would raise the debt ceiling through reconciliation because they should, and we want to do it that way to deter spending in the future. We want to make it harder to use reconciliation to spend more money than World War II cost.

If you look at the cost of World War II in present dollars, it was 4.7 trillion. When you look at all the money we spent and going to spend, it is going to be 5.4 trillion. Literally, we have spent more money in the last year and a half than we did to win World War II.

I think they should raise the debt ceiling, Senator KENNEDY, through the

process they used to spend the money. That made perfect sense to me as a Republican. That is why I said it for 4 months.

Now, all of us on our side have a moment of reckoning here. I don't want to default, and we won't. But I do want to make sure that when Republicans tell their other Republicans and the public at large, you can somewhat count on who we are and what we say. We put that at risk for no good reason.

To the leadership of both sides, I like you. Senator MCCONNELL has been a great Republican leader—minority leader, majority leader. But this is a moment where I want to be on the RECORD to say, I don't like this.

What we have done is allow the House of Representatives to change a Senate rule. No matter what the subject matter, that is not a good idea. We have set in place a process that allows our Democratic colleagues to raise the debt ceiling without using reconciliation, the budget process, where they would have to amend the budget resolution. The very resolution they used to spend all this money, we are simply asking amend it to pay for it.

We have taken that off the table, and people on our side are not going to accept this very well. So all I can say is—I want to make it clear—when it comes to Medicare, count me in to avoid the cuts. When it comes to raising the debt ceiling, I want it done through a process that will make it harder to spend all this money in the future. And I want to be part of a Republican Party that you can take what we say to the bank on big stuff—stuff that matters.

So I have a proposal that when the bill comes over from the House, which it is here, that would allow us to vote to prevent Medicare from being cut, would strip out the way you are going to raise the debt ceiling, reject the idea that the House can amend a Senate rule to limit minority rights—and that is what we have done here.

This is not a good idea, to take Medicare and marry it up with anything important, as Senator HAWLEY said, because there is no end to that game. And it is not a good idea, in my view, even with some Members of my own party agreeing, to let the House change the Senate rules. I don't like that. We have set in motion some really dangerous stuff here, so I have the following proposal:

As if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate resumes consideration of House message to accompany S. 610, it be in order for me to offer amendment No. 4877, which strikes section 8 relating to the debt limit. I further ask that the Senate vote on adoption of the amendment prior to the vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to concur in the amendment to S. 610.

In English, I am asking for a vote so that we can show the country that we will protect Medicare, but many of us are not going to have our fingerprints on a Washington deal that I think stinks up the place.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. WYDEN. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, now, my colleague from South Carolina began his remarks with two of my very favorite subjects: supporting America's senior citizens and playing in the NBA, a lifetime dream of mine.

But the fact is, this unanimous consent request from my colleague is essentially a different way to do the same thing as the Kennedy request. And, colleagues, it is wrong for exactly the same reason.

The prospect of default is not simply a matter of the two sides squaring off over who has got the best talking points. The fact is, default would just be an economic disaster.

I just laid out what it would mean for our small businesses and our folks who depend on keeping interest rates from shooting into the stratosphere, and the military would have difficulty getting paid. That is not what America wants.

Colleagues, I was just home this weekend. I got around my State, and what people said overwhelmingly is—they said: "Hey, I heard you guys just got together"—I say to my friend from South Carolina—"and you guys got an agreement on keeping the government open. Heard that wasn't going to happen."

And then they said: "Ron, what you have always tried to do since those Gray Panther days"—and my colleague from South Carolina knows I always try to be bipartisan.

They said: "Keep it going. Keep going with that bipartisan effort."

Now, they are listening to a debate about my colleagues trying to bust up an agreement between the Democratic leader, Senator SCHUMER, and the Republican leader, MITCH MCCONNELL, to make sure we pay the bills for costs that have been incurred.

So my colleague from South Carolina has asked for consent, and I think it would be a mistake for this country and be a mistake particularly for our country's senior citizens that I have devoted so much time to. For that reason, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. So why does this matter? It matters a lot about how the Senate works. Every Member of this body has the ability to come down to the floor and object to a piece of legislation. That makes the Senate different than the House.

What we have done here is allowed the House to change the Senate rules in a fashion where, if you can get 10 Republicans, all of us are dealt out. So that is not a good idea 1 time, 10 times, or 100 times by either party because what it does, it changes the rules of the Senate in a fashion that I feel very uncomfortable with simply because the

House has been able to change the rules of the Senate so that all of us have been basically marginalized.

There will be some Republicans who are my friends, and do what you need to do. I understand. I don't want to default on the debt either. But this is a bad idea. It is not what we promised we would do. It sets in motion playing the Medicare card in a dangerous fashion, and it sure as hell sets in motion playing with the rules of the Senate in a fashion that I never even thought of until 24 hours ago.

So I want to make this hard, not easy, because I think what we are doing is going to really change the structure of the Senate and certainly going to do a lot of damage to the Republican Party.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). The Senator from Tennessee.

VACCINE MANDATE

Mr. HAGERTY. Mr. President, on September 9, President Biden announced that his Department of Labor, through OSHA, would issue a vaccine mandate covering more than 80 million privately employed Americans. Violators would be subject to significant financial penalties.

This mandate makes medical decisions for much of the American people with the stroke of a pen, and it immediately struck me as severe Federal overreach. Therefore, the next day, I wrote to the Secretary of Labor to confirm that he would submit this mandate to Congress for review under the Congressional Review Act. In that letter, I noted that Americans' elected representatives should review an order that threatens the livelihoods of many of their constituents.

I am pleased to join Senator BRAUN and a majority of my Senate colleagues in supporting this resolution to disapprove President Biden's vaccine mandate.

Regarding the mandate itself, I want to first say that I support the vaccine, which is a product of President Trump's Operation Warp Speed. I visited my doctor, and I made the personal choice to take the vaccine. I have spoken to many Tennesseans and have urged them to do the same. But the decision to take the vaccine is a personal one. It is a decision that each American should be allowed to make in consultation with his or her doctor, not under Federal threat of job loss and financial penalty. This mandate improperly puts the Federal Government between Americans and their doctors and between Americans and their jobs.

Tens of millions of essential workers were asked to risk their health for the good of the country during the pandemic. They courageously responded to this call. Many of them—many of them—contracted the virus. Yet now we are telling these heroes, from front-line healthcare workers to the employees who made sure we had access to groceries and essential goods, that they will be fired unless they comply